

Dufferin County Interfaith Forum to host annual potluck dinner

Written By **Paula Brown**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Dufferin County residents from various religious faiths will have the chance to converse with each other and further community connections at an upcoming cross-cultural event.

The Dufferin County Interfaith Forum will host its annual potluck dinner on Saturday, Feb. 10, at Trinity United Church, located at 200 Owen Sound St. in Shelburne, in recognition of the United Nations' World Interfaith Harmony Week.

"It feels so great to be able to do this [event] again. This is an opportunity to learn about each other, recognize our differences while appreciating our similarities, and accept each other. It only enhances the community for us to know each other," said Shaila (Bella) Carter, co-founder of the Dufferin County Interfaith Forum.

World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW) is an annual event that looks to promote harmony between different faith groups by recognizing their common values, sharing information, and building bonds.

The week of observance was first proposed at the UN General Assembly in September 2010 by H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan. It was unanimously adopted by the United Nations less than a month later. World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW) is observed annually during the first week of February.

World Interfaith Harmony Week was first recognized in Dufferin County in 2019, with a potluck dinner organized by Carter and the then Reverend of Trinity United Church, Dr. Candice Bist. The duo went on to develop a local monthly interfaith event called "Second Saturdays," which was held regularly until February of 2023.

"It was a wonderful event that really taught us about different ways of maneuvering around the world," Carter reflected on the event.

Carter initially planned to postpone hosting the 2024 interfaith potluck dinner following the passing of her husband, Alex, who was an instrumental member in organizing the event.

Speaking with the Free Press, Carter said she chose to revive the event in remembrance of her husband and their joint efforts to bring the community together.

"We were always intertwined in our work, always helping each other out. He would have wanted us to do it," said Carter. "For me, it's continuing the work we used to do together. I can still feel he's on my side, doing this with me."

This year, the Dufferin County Interfaith Forum Potluck Dinner will be dedicated in memory of Alex Carter and Sikh Priest Gurmant Singh, who were both significant participants in the forum.

Various representatives from the local Muslim, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist, and Christian groups will be present. Prior to the potluck dinner, each will make a prayer from their religion, speaking on the 2024 World Interfaith Harmony Week theme of peace and harmony.

The 2024 Interfaith Potluck Dinner will be held on Saturday, Feb. 10, at 6:30 p.m.

Those interested in attending the 2024 Interfaith Potluck Dinner can RSVP by emailing the event organizer, Shaila (Bella) Carter, at

shailacarter@gmail.com.